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## THE DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS OF THE HISTORY OF ISLAMIC SECTS IN TURKEY\*

*Türkiye 'de İslam Mezhepleri Tarihinin Gelişim Süreci*

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### ÖZET

İslam Mezhepleri Tarihi, İslam düşüncesinin teşekkülü sürecinde kendi geleneğini çok erken bir dönemde oluşturmaya başaran bir disiplindir. İslam Mezhepleri Tarihi, geçmişte ve günümüzde siyasi ve itikadi gayelerle vücut bulmuş 'İslam Düşünce Ekolleri' diyebileceğimiz beşeri ve toplumsal oluşumların, doğdukları ortamı, doğuş sebeplerini, teşekkül süreçlerini, fikirlerini, mensuplarını, edebiyatını, yayıldığı bölgeleri, İslam düşüncesine katkılarını kendi eserlerinden hareketle zaman-mekân bağlamında ve fikir-hadise irtibatı çerçevesinde betimleyici metotla ve tarafsız bir gözle inceleyen bir bilim dalıdır. İslam düşüncesinde erken dönemde ortaya çıkan ve kendine özgü metodu, edebiyatı ve yaklaşım tarzı olan Makalat ve Fırak geleneği, temel İslam bilimleri açısından aktif ve belirleyici bir konuma sahip olmasına rağmen zaman içerisinde ihmal edilmiştir.

### ABSTRACT

History of Islamic Sects is a discipline which has succeeded in forming its own tradition at a very early stage during the organizational process of Islamic ideology. It is a branch of social sciences, which examines the emerging environment of the humanitarian and social organizations that can be called as "Islamic Thought Ecoles" formed by some political and religious aims in the past and present and the possible reasons of their emergence, organizational processes, basic tenets, members, literary works, dominant regions and their contributions to the Islamic thought, within the context of time, space and the scope of links between ideology-incidents, by using a descriptive method and objective viewpoint. The tradition of Malakat and Fırak that emerged in the early periods of Islamic Thought and which have their own unique methods, literature and points of view, have been ignored over time although they once had an active determining status in terms of basic Islamic sciences.

History of Islamic Sects is a discipline which has succeeded in forming its own tradition at a very early stage during the organizational process of Islamic ideology. The pioneers of this branch were the members of the first religious sects such as the Kharijites which were trying to prove their own existence through the works as Malakat. After the emergence of Sects, the era of Milal va'n Nihal which can be defined as the most important stage of the History of Islamic Sects has begun. It is possible to see the different sects resulted from the institutionalization of distinctions between religious understandings, within the pages of works on the history of Islamic Sects. The sects like Kharijites, Shiism, Murjiis and Mutazilis can be seen as the main veins of the ideas that were produced by the Moslems within the historical flow. In this aspect, it is possible to follow the general development of Islamic Thought by the works on the History of Islamic Sects. The History of Islamic

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Sects is a discipline which is interested in the organizational and emergence processes of the ideas embodying the sects in its essence. Although it is sometimes confused with the History of Religious Remarks (al- Kalam) and the History of Islam from time to time, or though it is wanted to be considered as a sub-branch of these sciences; with its origins, literature and the current level, the History of Islamic Thoughts is a discipline which has its own unique status, sources and methodology. If the works on this field are thoroughly examined, it can easily be seen that the History of Sects is a discipline that strengthened its own status both in terms of modern scientific perception along with the methodology and the scientific mentality as well. (Onat, 2002, 236-254)

The discipline that researches the history and the Basic Views of Islamic Thought Ecoles, is called as *Makalat*, *Ilmu 'l-Makalat*, *Ilmu Makalati 'l-Fırak*, *Milal-Nihal*, *al-Ehwa ve 'l-Bid'a*; the researchers of this discipline are called as Ashabu'l-Makalat (Historians of Islamic Thought Ecoles). In the process of differentiation started with the Kharijism, a new era called as *Milal-Nihal* has begun with the emergence of sects like Murjiis, Mutazilis and Shiism. Major characteristic of this process is to study the sects in a comparable way and to include some views of other religions as well. (Fıglalı, 2007, 18) Until now, there have been 73 different traditions in the system of studying and classifying the sects. Islamic Thought Ecoles are now studied by the discipline of History of Islamic Thoughts. There are now some definitions made according to the subject matter and area of the History of Islamic Sects. (Fıglalı, 1985, 369-377; Onat, 2002, 236)

A discipline named as Islamic Thought Ecoles has been developed for dealing with these kinds of structures within the historical process. This discipline has formed some important unique concepts such as *fırka* (faction), sect, *Makalat*, *Milal-Nihal* and *Ehl-i Bid'a*. In addition, a rumour suggesting that Islamic community would be separated into 73 factions, has affected the methods and content of the works on the religious sects, as many of the authors tried not to exceed the number of 73 while defining the sects. Introducing the conceptual framework emerged in these works; developmental process of thought ecoles will provide a better understanding. Islamic thought ecoles are defined as different views on Islam or the differences of interpretation. However, some of these sects have put interpretations on political and economical matters of Islam while some others have put on Islamic laws-actions and moral dimensions. Following the institutionalization of these interpretations, different relations between the religion and these structures have emerged. Sometimes sects are identified with the religion and sometimes they pushed its own limits by going beyond the framework of Islam. (Kutlu, 2006, 3)

It is possible to generate a new definition upon considering the area, limits, subject and methods of this scientific branch. According to this, Kutlu defines the History of Islamic Sects like this : The history of Islamic Sects, is a branch of social sciences that examines the emergence environment of the humanitarian and social organizations that can be called as "Islamic Thought Ecoles" formed by some political and religious aims in the past and present and the possible reasons of their emergence, organizational processes, basic tenets, members, literary works, dominant regions and their contributions to the Islamic thought , within the context of time and space and the scope of links between ideology-incidents, by using a descriptive method and objective viewpoint. (Kutlu, 2003, 395-6; Kutlu, 2008, 10-11)

History of Islamic sects has served to strengthen the unity of Islamic community by explaining the common and different basic views of sects, by providing the ideological and intellectual richness on religious subjects and by revealing the clashes caused by the obsession and fanaticism, also it has prevented the corruption of Islamic belief. Maintaining the intellectual and ideological richness on the religious views of Moslem people by way of introducing the common and uncommon basic views of the sects, and revealing the clashes caused by the obsessions which have replaced the religious

tolerance are the major objectives for the History of Islamic Sects. In other words, they are the problem-solving intellectual organizations that have enlightened and liberalized the Islamic community rather than being the exclusionist, accusatory, denunciatory and heathenizing, problem-making organizations.

Every discipline has its own subject, field, resources and methods. History of Religious Sects is also a unique social science. In explaining the political, social and historical grounds of the views, it benefits from the methods and techniques of History, Social history, History of Religions and the Philosophy of History in general, and specifically History of Islam. The history of religious sects not only deals with the past but also the present. Its dealing with present requires the examining the living facts by using the travel, observation, survey, interview, qualitative and quantitative methods of modern social sciences. History of Religious Sects, in the modern period, is trying to discuss the sects in a "what really it is" descriptive method rather than defining the sects as superstitious beliefs with a defensive attitude of the classical period.(Kutlu, 2008, 12-15)

There have been important developments in History of Sects. In line with the modern scientific developments, History of Islamic Sects has begun to be researched in an academic framework and through the use of methodological studies conducted in West, new methods and approaches have been developed. History of Islamic Sects has been developed in a deeper cooperation with the Ilme'l Kalam in early periods. Classical History of Sects presents the inconvenient beliefs that are contrary to the Tawhid of Islam. History of Islamic Sects is separated from Kalam with some aspect. While the History of Sects is examining the developmental process of an idea starting from its core state to its final shape along with its transformation to intellectual groups through institutionalization, Kalam mostly deals with its final shape and the criticism of the ideas contrary to the Islamic doctrines.(Kutlu, 2008, 12-15; Öz, 2011, 38)

History of Islamic Sects is also in a good cooperation with the History of Islam that deals with the historical and political events experienced by Moslem societies from the birth of Islam to the present. Rather than being an ordinary doctrinaire movement pioneered by a single individual, sects are the outcome of the political, historical, economical and cultural environment of the society in which they emerged. For instance, History of Islamic Sects cannot clarify the ideological and political differences emerged after the Battles of the Camel and Siffin without depending on the data obtained by the relevant resources of History of Islam. Likewise, History of Islam cannot discuss the further developments following these battles and the political history of the Omayyad, without using the data of History of Islamic Sects about the ideological movements such as Kharijites, Murjiis and Shiism of that age. Therefore, History of Islam studies on the history of the states founded by the Moslem societies, while the History of Islami Sects studies the sectarian structures organized as a result of ideological and political differences in Moslem societies. Both of these sciences are following a common method in resource criticism by moving away from being rumour-based and normative in the modern period.(Kutlu, 2008, 15-16; Öz, 2011, 38)

Truth-superstitious paradigm used by Classical period Historians of Islamic Sects in studying the sects has also been used in studying the religions. Today, both of these sciences have preferred a descriptive method rather than normative attitude towards the religions and sects shown by the former representatives, and they have become independent sciences in the modern period.

History of Religions, dealing with the birth and development of the religions as well as their opinions of belief, worship and morals; still preserves its importance in understanding the origins of different views of sects; as some of the Islamic factions have been strongly influenced by the pre-Islamic religions and cultures in generating their ideas.(Büyükkara, 2005, 479-480)

Data of the Sociology science that defines compares and interprets a society living in a certain time and place and its social realities, are highly important in better understanding and interpreting the sects emerging as the reflections of the religion on society of today. Religious sociology analyzes the influence of religion over society and vice versa through the mutual relations between society and religion. Though, the history of sects deals with the role of the sects as the religious understanding, on the manifestation in society, its traditions, and customs as well as its role on the continuity of social structure. In this aspect, both Religious Sociology and the History of Islamic Sects are interested in social structures. The first one focuses on religion's effect on society while the latter one focuses on social manifestation of the sects. (Büyükkara, 2005, 460)

Psychology of Religion produces typologies examining the human types in terms of their religious capacity. In addition, it tries to figure out the religious, emotional, ideological, practical and inner life of religious and charismatic leaders. Therefore, such analyses and typologies of Psychology bring an important approach in classifying texts of Islamic Sects in terms of their mentality, sorting them into typologies and revealing and examining the common prototypes among them. (Kutlu, 2008, 21)

After the death of the Prophet, Moslems encountered with some political problems and the consistency of the social structure which was based on the unity of belief began to be shattered. Although these problems were surpassed during the first two caliphates, they gained new dimensions during the time of the 3rd caliph, Osman. Until his murder, these political controversies remained invisible. After his death, the political controversies turned to armed conflicts and as a result of these incidents, these debates led to new political polarizations. With the expansion of Islam into larger territories that have different civilizations, cultures, religions and philosophical systems, many different views and opinions began to infiltrate in Moslem society. Thus, the social change and developments brought the differentiation of the institutionalization of religion and the emergence of political-religious movements. Both the political and the religious sects also the sects about the beliefs as well, were emerged as the natural results of this process. As a result, every ideological and philosophical ecole, wrote some political works that defend their opinions while rejecting the opponents, and so there emerged a large literature in this field. Islamic sciences have improved in the areas and cultural centers where these thought ecoles were affective. This situation has resulted in occurrence of unique belief, discourse, interpretation and traditional literature of all sects. These thought ecoles which have brought a significant dynamism in the development of Islamic sciences, are important issues that should not be overlooked in enlightenment of academic activities and the further development of religious sciences. (Kutlu, 2009, 41)

Shiite, Mutazilis and Sunnites which emerged as a result of political differences, formed their own beliefs, interpretations and traditional literature. Religious literature formed within Shiite with the numerous aspects such as Isna-Asheria, Ismailiyya or Zaydiyya; were mainly developed from political grounds. Greek philosophy ecoles and the gnostic philosophy helped the formation of "innocent imam" view by leaking into Shiite philosophy. Shiite has used all former and the latter philosophical arguments for a political reason. In addition, we also know that the Kharijites were formed by a political factor. Mutazilis is political both in terms of the reason of emergence and the line of development. During the time of Ebu Huzayl al-Allaf this sect gained a political aspect. After then, when it turned to be the official view of the political authority its dominance lasted for a long time. Some people have argued further that the main aim of transferring the Peripatetic philosophy into Islamic world was to support the political views. The best example confirming this situation is Farabi. Most of the ideological conflicts and fluctuations have acted as an important factor in development of

İlm-el kalam, fikh, tafsir and hadith. The people who aimed at turning their political opinions to a belief used these sciences.(en-Neşşâr, 1999, 1/312-13)

During the time of Umayyads, with the increasing role of tribal differences and competition on social and political matters, there occurred serious conflicts and debates among the Arabian tribes and between Arabs and the non-Arab elements. During that time, enlightenment and development of ancient Arabic poetry and literature became the focus of attention. Arabian poets and scholars were supported. Thus, Arabian poetry tradition was improved greatly, Arabian culture and literature brought together.

Although The History of Islamic Sects was among the Islamic sciences that were formed in earlier times with the names of Ilmu'l-Makalat, Makalati'l-Firak, Milal ve'n-Nihal, has been overlooked for centuries. The issues about the sects were mainly included in Kalam books especially compiled during the times of Ottoman Empire or in the forms of pamphlets. The last phase of Ottoman era was a process in which there was much progress in the fields of the History of Islamic Sects. Because this scientific discipline gained a status of independence and separate science after the second constitutional period. The History of Islamic Sects gained a greater impetus in being an independent science especially during the last phase of the Ottoman Empire. Within the historical process, in 1909 in the Fatih Tabhane Madrasa, *Milal va'n-Nihal ve Muhtasar Fasl ve Tuhfa-i Isna-Asheria* courses were lectured. In 1911, in Regulation Medarisi İlmîyye, *Milal va'n-Nihal* courses were advised in the department of Kalam. In 1913, in the department of ministry in Hikmeti'l-Dar al-Islamiyya, *Mazahib-i Islamiyya ve Turuk-u Âliye* courses were taught. In 1914, The Madrasa of Daru'l-Hilafeti'l-Aliyye was founded. In this madrasa, in departments of Kalam and Tafsir departments there was a course named as *History of Edyan and Mazahib*. The first lecturers of The History of Islamic Sects were Haydarîzâde İbrahim Efendi(1933) and Mahmud Esad(1857-1917).(Aydın, 2008, 211-213).

Being an academic discipline in the last phase of Ottomans and the inclusion of it in the curriculum, the History of Islamic Sects, entered a new phase of methodological improvement in the early Republican period. Among the reasons that require this branch to be a separate academic discipline, there are the needs to be informed about the religion and the sects, the multitude of the heterodox trends occurred as a result of that time's socio cultural conditions and the parallelism to the political policies of the time. When we look into the development of History of Islamic Sects in the early years of Republican Era, we see the best examples in the course curriculum of Dârul-Funûn Faculty of Divinity and in the articles published in the journal of that faculty. (Onat, 2002, 239)

With the founding of Turkish Republic, a new era began in the academic life. With the Article 4 of the 430 numbered Law on the Unification of Education, dated in 3 March 1924, it was decided to build a Faculty of Divinity under the Dârul-Funûn to train "experts on high religious education". In the Faculty of Divinity started the academic activities in May 1914, Katib-i Public Teachers Yusuf Ziya Yorukan lectured on the History of Islamic Sects.(Öz, 2011, 30)

The education in the Faculty of Divinity was divided into two terms in Dârul-Funûn 1929-1930 Academic Year. The curriculum of the first term was in the aim of improving the general knowledge of the students by successfully complementing them. In the curriculum of the second term lasting for two years, there were specialization courses.(Aydın, 2005, 73). Again in the curriculum for 1929-1939 academic year, according to the Article 8 of Dârul-Funûn regulation, there was a course named as *Current Islamic Sects*. This course was given in 4 hours a week during the term.(Er, 1993, 13) *Current Islamic Sects* was lectured by Muallim Yusuf Ziya.(Ayni, 1995, 94) According to the program of *Current Islamic Sects* "The Method of Determining the Sects" was taught in winter term and "General Overview on the Current Islamic Sects" was taught in the summer term.(Er, 1993, 18-19) There were some differences in the curriculums for 1930-1931, 1931-1932 academic years. However

in the summer and winter terms, Muallim Yusuf Ziya lectured on "Islamic Sects among Turkish Moslems" and "Safaviyye Shiite and Qizilbashi"( Er, 1993, 27) In the Islamic Research Institute founded in replacement of Dârul-Funûn Faculty of Divinity, there was a course named as "Turkish Religions and the History of Sects".

Yusuf Ziya Yorukan, began lecturing *Current Islamic Sects and the Ethnography of Islamic Nations* in 1926 in Dârul-Funûn Faculty of Divinity. In 1933 Dârul-Funûn was abolished and the Faculty of Divinity was closed due to the lack of students. After the abolition of Divinity Faculty, he taught a course on the religions of Turkish people before and after the Islam with the lessons named as Turkish Religions and The History of Islamic Sects in Istanbul University, Faculty of Letters Islamic Research Institute between 1933-1936. Due to his works about the History of Islamic Sects, he was assigned with the duty of writing a book on "Turkish Religions and Turkish Sects" by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1931.(Yörük, 1998, 3-7; Onat, 2002, 239; Kutlu, 2008, 148)

When Ankara University Faculty of Divinity was founded in 1949, the lessons about the history of Islamic Sects were presented as a separate discipline in the group of sciences on Islamic Civilizations in the draft prepared by Hilmi Ziya Ulken. In the curriculum of the 1st year program in 1949-1950 Academic Year in Ankara University Faculty of Divinity, it was included as Islamic Religion and the History of Sects. The lecturer of that course was again Prof. Yusuf Ziya Yorukan. In 1953-54 Academic Year, in the new program formed for all the programs joint under the faculty, the name of the course was The History of Islamic Sects.(Ayhan, 1999, 218 vd; Kutlu, 2008, 148; Öz, 2011, 30)

This course, in the early periods in Higher Islamic Institute opened under the authority of Education Board in İstanbul, in 1959, was taught by lecturers whose major was not History of Islamic Sects and it gained a special importance after Muhammed b. Tavid et-Tancî began teaching the referred course following the 1965-1966 academic year. The important issues such as the qualities of Religion and Sects, their differences, the possibility of having various sects, thought or ideological ecoles within the scope of religion resulted by the different interpretations of religious members, the fact that it's not a defect and it will not cause blasphemy among religious members due to the ideological differences unless they reject the major principles; the emergence of sects should not be seen as a weakness but as a natural occurrence have been explained in convincing details by Muhamed Tanci. Therefore, not only the horizons of the students studying at High Institute of Islam were opened up but also the history of Islamic Sects gained its well-deserved importance at last as well.(Kutlu, 2008, 148; Öz, 2011, 31)

The chair of The History of Islamic Sects was administered by Yusuf Ziya Yorukan, Muhammed Tanci, Yasar Kutluay, Neset Cagatay and Ethem Ruhi Fırlalı respectively. With the changes brought by the founding of Higher Education Council, The History of Islamic Sects was turned to a branch under the Major Branch of Kalam. In this era, Sabri Hizmetli was the head of the History of Islamic Sects department for a while. (Onat, 2002, 239; Kutlu, 2008, 148)

After the Higher Education Council began to work, following the 1982-1983 a new curriculum for Faculties of Divinity was adopted and the History of Islamic Sects was turned to a discipline under the department of Kalam. With the Article 7-d/2of the law number 2547 dated in 17.10.1991 of Higher Education Council, The History of Islamic Sects became a major branch. In the configuration done within the frame of Article 3 of 2809 numbered law, this major branch included Classical Islamic Sects and Contemporary Islamic Trends sub-branches. Since changing the department chair of History of Islamic Sects to the status of major branch, Prof. Dr Hasan Onat has been ruling the head of the major department in Ankara University Faculty of Divinity.

In the Faculty of Divinity program in 1998-2010, this course was turned to 4 credit courses given in the spring term of 3rd year as the History of Islamic Sects I, and in Fall term of the 4th year as The History of Islamic Sects II. In the following years in response to the growing need, there were some extra lessons added such as Current Islamic Trends and Religious Trends in Turkey

As of today, The faculties of Divinity in Turkey studies these subjects within the History of Islamic Sects; as a priority, an approach to determine a classical period sects and to choose the contemporary sects or religious trends as a major research area is adopted and a new tradition has been formed in this way.

Marmara University Faculty of Divinity which concentrates on Classical period, Sects, is one of the most influential Faculties of Divinity. The faculties and research centers in which there is a huge impact of Marmara University are Istanbul University, Sakarya University and Rize University Faculty of Divinities along with the academicians studying there on this field.

After completing their masters of PhD Studies in the Faculty of Divinity in Ankara University, the academicians working in other universities' faculties followed the methodology of the faculty referred above. In the studies carried out in Hitit, Firat, İnönü, Sıtcu Imam, Dicle, Erciyes, Yüzüncü Yıl, Cukurova, Selçuk, Eskisehir Osmangazi, Atatürk and Harran University Faculties of Divinity, there is –wholly or at least partially- a direct effect of Ankara University Faculty of Divinity. It is striking that the major importance was given to the early period Islamic Sects in masters or PhD studies without any exceptions. Some of the faculties which directed towards the Classical period Sects are Dokuz Eylül University Faculty of Divinity, Marmara University, Harran University and Uludağ University Faculties of Divinity.

Among the faculties that concentrate on the Current Sects and Alawism; there are 19 Mayıs, Cumhuriyet University Faculties of Divinity.

The faculties which mainly focus on Historical Alewism, the structure occurred with the clashes between The Ottoman-Safawi, the sects which were formed during Ottoman era and the Islamic movements are Suleyman Demirel and Harran University Faculties of Divinity. In Atatürk University Faculty of Divinity, different subject were studied in the History of Islamic Sects. They focused mainly on the modernist Islamic trends which occurred during the Ottoman era or after the Tanzimat Reformation era and lasted until our day. In addition, in Selçuk University Faculty of Divinity, some of the studies on the History of Islamic Sects are focused on the classical Works.

The History of Islamic Sects has been developed considerably during the modern period. Especially with the founding of Dârü'l-Funûn Faculty of Divinity and Ankara University Faculty of Divinity in Republican era, a new period has begun. Yusuf Ziya Yörükân, M. Tavit et-Tancı and the following generations brought up by them have conducted ground-breaking researches on the method, resources and fields of this science within the modern scientific developments. Today, an extensive literature has been formed in terms of compilation, translation and collation both on classical sects and living sects of our time along with the modern religious trends. With these works, it succeeded in getting its place among the Islamic sciences that have adapted themselves into modern period. (Kutlu, 2008, 176)

In conclusion, the traditions of Makalat and Fıraq, which emerged in the early period of Islamic Thought and which have their own methods, literature and approaches; have been overlooked within time although they have an active and determining status in terms of Basic Islamic Sciences. However, as a branch of science which defines, clarifies and analyses the political and religious thought ecoles, the reasons of their emergence, the processes of their development and their contributions to the Islamic thought; this discipline has now shown a great deal of progress. In this aspect, The History of Islamic Sects is a science that emerged from the institutionalization of the differentiations of the

religious understanding and exploring the man-made sects with scientific methods. While the İlm-al Kalam focuses on the ideas in theory, The History of Islamic Sects researches about the emerging processes and the institutionalization stages of the ideas and tries to enlighten them.

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